

Message Text

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46

ACTION IO-13

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6311

INFO USUN NEW YORK 650

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COLOMBO 4520

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PDIP, PINR, CE

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF BEN FONSEKA TO SRI LANKA UN DELEGATION

1. WITH THE RESIGNATION OF E.L. F. DE J. (ELMO) SENEVIRATNE FROM THE SRI LANKA OVERSEAS SERVICE TO JOIN THE STAFF OF UNIDO, THE NUMBER TWO JOB IN THE SRI LANKA MISSION TO THE UN WILL BE FILLED BY VETERAN DIPLOMAT IGNATIUS BENEDICT (BEN) FONSEKA. FONSEKA IS ONE OF THE THREE MOST SENIOR CAREER DIPLOMATS IN SRI LANKA, BUT HAS BEEN LANGUISHING IN COLOMBO SINCE 1974 FOR LACK OF A SUITABLE POSITION FOR SUCH A SENIOR OFFICIAL. HE HAS PROBABLY SUFFERED FROM BEING JUDGED POLITICALLY MORE ATTUNED TO THE OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY THAN TO THE GOVERNMENT.

2. BORN IN 1925, FINSEKA JOINED THE OVERSEAS SERVICE IN 1949 AND SERVED IN WASHINGTON, LONDON RANGOON, BONN, PEKING, AND CAIRO, BEFORE BEING APPOINTED DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NEW DELHI (THROUGH 1966). HE RETURNED HOME TO FILL THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN RELATIONS UNTIL 1970 WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO KENYA, SRI LANKA'S ONLY SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN POST.

3. HIS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN NEW YORK INCLUDES SERVING AS ADVISOR TO THE SRI LANKA DELEGATION TO THE 15TH UNGA AND, AT SOME STAGE, STUDYING AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

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4. FONSEKA IS A CATHOLIC. HIS WIFE IS A BURGHER
(EURASIAN) ANCESTRY. EMBASSY COLOMBO HAS FOUND FONSEKA TO
BE A CONGENIAL AND HELPFUL CONTACT WITH A GENERALLY
PRO-WESTERN ORIENTATION. HE HAS A RATHER WRY, SELF-DEPRECATING
SENSE OF HUMOR.
REED

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